

**SWUF Executive Committee Members
2007-8:**

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Doug Turner

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Staff:

Graham Lacey (Manager and Counselling
Co-ordinator)

Geoff Anderton (Administrator)

Sue Oldham (User Involvement Development
Worker)

Heather Payne (Media Action Worker)

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News are those of the individual contributors
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Editors: Graham Lacey and Sue Oldham.

Wanted User Representatives

If you would like to share your experiences of mental health services and hopefully influence future services, you would be welcome to join our team of user representatives. We particularly welcome users that have experienced the Home Treatment team, In-patient services, Day services or Primary Care services such as the Community Mental Health team and Outpatient services. An induction is provided and a monthly support meeting of all representatives is now held.

Travel expenses plus an hourly fee of £5.75 an hour are paid for attendance at meetings. Lifts will be provided where public transport is difficult.

Telephone Sue 01926 334257 if you are interested in joining us.

For further information, Contact;

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Sue Oldham

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South Warwickshire User Forum

AUTUMN 2008 newsletter

Awareness, Media and Information Project

Since the launch of the Awareness, Media and Information Project on 19th May, we have an established Media Watch Group who meet each fortnight at the Community Arts Workshop in Leamington. The members are drawn from Leamington, Stratford and Warwick – with two brave souls making the trip from Coventry!

The Media Watch Group has been busy monitoring and analysing the local media's reporting of mental health issues, as well as developing the following:

- a weekly TV alert informing people of forthcoming TV programmes with a mental health content
- a website (www.stopstigma.org.uk) to display the group's findings and provide information on mental health issues
- a Facebook group - SWUF Media Watch Group Official Facebook Site

One of the aims of the Project is to increase the number of positive articles appearing in the local media involving people who are users or survivors of mental health services. We have achieved four positive representations within the last 6 months. On World Mental Health Day (Oct 10), two members, Joanne and Kay, shared their story in the Coventry/Warwickshire Telegraph, giving a much needed human dimension to the day.

The setting up of TalkBank in the coming weeks will increase the number of positive representations in the region's media. Talkbank is the name of a group of volunteers who have agreed to talk to the media about their experiences of mental and emotional distress. Full training will be pro-



vided and we'll guide volunteers through every step of the process. If you'd like to find out more, let me know.

Finally, we've been busy organising two arts 'events' for 2008. The SWUF/AMI Project Poetry Competition was launched in August with appeals for entries appearing in the local press. The competition was judged by Peter Ormerod, Editor of the Leamington Courier Series, and the results will be announced shortly.

As part of the AMI Project, a Photography Workshop was held during September. Photographs taken at this event were entered into the Community Arts Workshop Open Up exhibition, and I was able to give a short presentation at the launch event on World Mental Health Day.

If you'd like to get involved in the AMI Project, or find out more, please get in touch.

Heather Payne, Media Action Worker,
heather@swuf.org.uk



Central Hospital 1852 - 1995

Few fond memories

Our Guest Speaker at this year's AGM is Fran Godwin, Director of The Community Arts Workshop. His talk about his proposals for the next big exhibition at the Community Art Gallery is about the history of the big asylums like the one above. There is a fair amount of material in the Warwick Archives and he is also hoping to feature some of our stories about the place.

Because it was a place out of town that people in distress or regarded as difficult or earlier simply unemployed were taken to, the stigma still remains.

I was taken there twice under section and under protest. The first time was experienced as abuse whatever was intended. That was in 1967, I was locked in a room on a crowded ward. I felt my only contact with reality was through the broken window out of which I could see the stars at night. Periodically the door would open and a plate with meal would be slid along the floor. At other times two or three nurses would enter, hold me down, inject me in my backside and I would be out for an

unknown period of time. It was over a week before I was given an open door to the day room. I was lucky that my parents seeing the state of the place were able to transfer me to a private clinic in Northampton called Wantage House. As my GP said the Central was not a hospital in which people got better. I was out of Wantage House in 2 months and back at work in three.

I was back there a second time in the early seventies. By then it had improved. The corridors were no longer jammed with beds and it was possible to have access to a psychiatrist. However I still had to escape to force a discharge from the hospital. I stayed with a friend in Hampshire for two weeks. When I returned I made the mistake of calling a friend who I had met there as a fellow patient. When the police called at my house I managed to persuade them that they were looking for my brother. I then phoned them and got contact with the psychiatrist who eventually discharged me provided I agreed to another injection. I then got a job on a building site and was able to persuade the CPN to discharge me from care. I haven't been back or taken any medication since.

That people are now paying to live there is a source of amazement to me. G.L.

SWUF AGM Saturday 29th November

This year's AGM is being held at St Mary's Church Centre, St Mary's Road, Leamington Spa CV31 1JW. Coffee and tea will be available from 10.30 and the meeting will start at 11.00.

The feature on the opposite page was added because our Guest Speaker Fran Godwin will be discussing his proposals for a new exhibition about the history of asylums including the Central.

On a slightly more mundane level members are encouraged to attend and hear a report for the year and elect new committee members. Full annual reports and accounts will be available on the day. Buffet lunch will be provided at 12.30pm.

Warwickshire User Involvement Strategy 2008 – 2011

This has been co-written by South Warwickshire User Forum and Voices 4 Choices and sets out our vision for user involvement in Warwickshire. The purpose of user involvement as we see it is to enable mental health service users to participate as equal partners in the planning, delivery and monitoring of mental health services, thus ensuring that the services provided meet the needs of the people who use them and no longer dis-empower them. We were delighted to be given the opportunity to write this strategy for ourselves rather than "help" someone else write it for us. We are currently writing the follow-up implementation plan which we hope all the mental health service provider and commissioner organisations will sign up to. Copies can be downloaded from our website (www.swuf.org.uk) or are available on request from our office.

Associate Director - User & Carer Involvement

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust have recently advertised this post. Interviews will take place on 19th December.

The role has been developed after consultation with a Coalition of Coventry AIMHS, North Warwickshire's Voices 4 Choices and South Warwickshire User Forum which was facilitated by Christine Trethowan. The person appointed will lead on the development and implementation of strategies at all levels for user and carer involvement across Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust.



New Warwickshire Web mental health website

Recently revamped, this website provides information, advice and support for people who are experiencing problems with mental health, or for those who care for / live / work with someone who is experiencing problems. There are now links to important strategy documents which can be downloaded, for instance the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Warwickshire 2008. The website can be viewed at the www.warwickshire.gov.uk website.